

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher presents the importance of learning listening, problems in learning listening and the solutions of the problems in learning listening.

2.1 The Importance of Learning Listening

Listening is the ability to understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and vocabulary, and grasp his meaning (Howatt and Deakin, in Saricoban; 1999). According to Bulletin (in Saricoban, 1999), listening is one of the fundamental language skills. It is a medium through which children, young people and adults gain a large portion of their education-their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation.

Listening is a demanding process. One must be able to deal with different accents and pronunciation, unfamiliar lexical items and syntactic structure, compete background noise and make a conscious effort to not "switch off" or become distracted while listening. All of these must be achieved and dealt with more or less simultaneously in order to understand the meaning in any given message (Shelton Scott, 1999).

Listening involves a number of basic processes, some depend upon linguistic competence; some depend upon previous knowledge that is not necessarily of a purely linguistic nature, and some depend upon psychological

variables that affect the mobilization of these competence and knowledge in the particular task situation. The listener must have continuous set to listen and understand, he hears the utterance, he may be helped by some kinds of set to process and remember the information transmitted. His linguistic competence enables him presumably, to recognize the formatives of the heard utterance, to dissect out of the wave from the morphemes, words, and other meaning-bearing elements of utterance.

Therefore, listening is one of the fundamental language skills for the learners in learning English as a second language. They must be able to understand and deal with what the speakers are saying as well as grasping the meaning that they listen from the speakers.

2.2 Problems in Learning Listening

Teaching listening skill is one of the most difficult tasks for any ESL teachers. This is because successful listening skills are acquired by second language students over time and with lots of practices. It is frustrating for students because there are no listening rules, as in grammar teaching, for becoming a good listener. Even speaking and writing have specific exercises that can lead to improved skills. This is not to say that there are no ways of improving listening skills. However, they are difficult to compute.

According to Bygate (1987, p.194-197), there are some obstacles to listening. They are message overload, message complexity, preoccupation, prejudgments, and lack of effort.

First of all, message overload often occurs in academic setting; in which reading and class discussion include detail information. It may also occur when communication occurs in two channels. For instance, the learner might suffer information overload if the lecturer is presenting the information verbally while at the same time also showing a visual aid. In such situation, it is difficult to know whether to focus on listening on the visual message or the verbal one.

Secondly, listening is also impeded by the difficulty of some information in some messages. The more detailed and complicated the ideas are, the harder to follow and retain the ideas it will be.

Thirdly, one of the most common obstacles to listening is preoccupation. When we are absorbed in our thoughts and concern, we cannot focus on what someone else is saying. When we are preoccupied with something other than what another person is saying, we are not listening mindfully.

Fourthly, another reason why we don't always listen effectively is that we prejudge others or their communication. Sometimes, we think already know what is being said so we don't listen carefully. In another case, we decide in advance that others have nothing to offer us, so we tune them out. In addition, sometimes we assume that we know what a speaker is feeling, thinking, and what others are going to say. When this happens, it often leads us to misunderstand what the person means because we do not really listen to his terms.

Fifthly, it takes a lot of effort to listen well, and sometimes we are not willing to do it. It is hard to be mindful, to focus closely on what others are saying

so that they know that we are interested and involved. Because listening takes so much effort, we are not always able to do it well. Sometimes we make a decision not to listen fully perhaps because the person or topic is not important to us.

Hence, listening skill is one of the most difficult in learning English a second language because there are many obstacles when we listen and make it really hard to know and understand.

2.3 The Solutions of the Problems in Learning Listening

Not all the problems described above can be overcome. But this does not mean that a teacher or students can do nothing about them. Here are some helpful ideas (Yagang, 1998).

Firstly, practice. Giving practice in liaison and elisions helps students get used to the acoustic form of rapid natural speech. It is useful to find rapidly uttered colloquial collocations and ask students to imitate native speakers' pronunciation. Penny Ur (1998:112) states that teachers may need to give learners practice in selective ignoring of heard information, something they do naturally in their mother tongue.

Secondly, making students aware of different native-speaker accents. Strong regional accents are not suitable for training in listening, but in spontaneous conversation native speakers do have certain accents. Yagang (1998) explains that the American accent is quite different from the British and Australian accents. Therefore, it is necessary to let students deal with different accents, especially in extensive listening. Alex (2008) has added that if it is an accent they particularly

need to understand, teachers could actually spend part of a lesson on the characteristics of that accent. In order to build up their ability to deal with different accents in the longer term, the best way is just to get them listening to a lot of English, e.g. TV without dubbing or BBC World Service Radio.

Thirdly, playing the tape or offer material live. Playing the tape or offering the material “live” ensure that the students are aware that they should not be trying to understand everything they hear, only enough to be able to do specific task (Shelton). Yagang (1998) added that providing students with a variety of input, such as lectures, radio news, movies, TV plays announcements, day-to-day conversations, interviews, case, English songs, and so can help students improve their listening ability. Trying to find visual aids or drawing picture and diagram associated with the listening topics helps students guess or imagine actively.

Fourthly, grading listening material. Yagang (1998) suggests to grade listening materials according to the students level, and provide authentic material rather than idealized, filtered samples. Nevertheless, the materials should progress step by step from semi authenticity that display most of the linguistic feature of natural speech to total authenticity, because the final aim is to understand natural speech in real life.

Brown and Yule (in Yagang, 1998) categorize spoken texts into three broad types: static, dynamic, and abstract. Texts that describe objects or give instruction are static texts. Those that tell a story recount an incident are dynamic texts. Those that focus on someone’s ideas and beliefs rather than on concrete objects are

abstract texts. The three types of input should be provided according to the difficulties they present and the students' level. They draw a figure, in which difficulty increases from left to right, and, within any one type of input, complexity increases from top to bottom.

Yagang (1998) suggests to select short simple listening texts with little redundancy for lower level students and complicated authentic material with more redundancy for advanced learners. Chaudron (in Yagang, 1998), add that it has been reported that elementary-level students are not capable of interpreting extra information in the redundant messages, whereas advanced listeners may benefit from messages being expanded, paraphrased, etc.

Fifthly, providing background knowledge and linguistic knowledge. Yagang (1998) states that it is important to provide background knowledge and linguistic, such as complex sentence structure and colloquial words and expression, as needed. It can help students to understand passage message.

Sixthly, giving task feedback. Give, and try to get, as much feedback as possible. Throughout the course the teacher should bridge the gap between input and students, response and between the teacher's feedback and students' reaction in order to keep activities purposeful (Yagang, 1998). It is important for the listening class teacher to give students immediate feedback on their performance. This not only promotes error correction but also provides encouragement. Yagang (1998) suggests that students' feedback can help teacher judge where the class is going and

how it should be guided. It can help students develop confidence in their ability to deal with listening problem.

Lastly, training students to predict something of the content of the text. The Cambridge CAE handbook, in Shalton, mentions this and other ideas for preparing exam students. It mentions the need to help them learn to focus on key words and use that information in completing gap-fill questions. It goes on to suggest going through the transcript after listening where a variety of activities can be employed. Shalton state that I like use transcript or noticing important language features such as linking devices and discourse makers, linguistic features of connected speech and vocabulary for follow-up work such as differentiating between formal and informal registers, or working on text cohesion by looking at forward and backward references.

In brief, a lot of the ideas above are the solutions of the problems in learning listening. It is helpful for the students find the way out to improve their listening skill.